

**August 2023**  
**Augustus 2023**

# 61 Mech Monthly

61 Mech Veterans Association

# 61 Meg Maandeliks

61 Meg Veterane Vereniging



## Annual Memorial Parade



**Ditsong  
Wes Kaap  
KZN**

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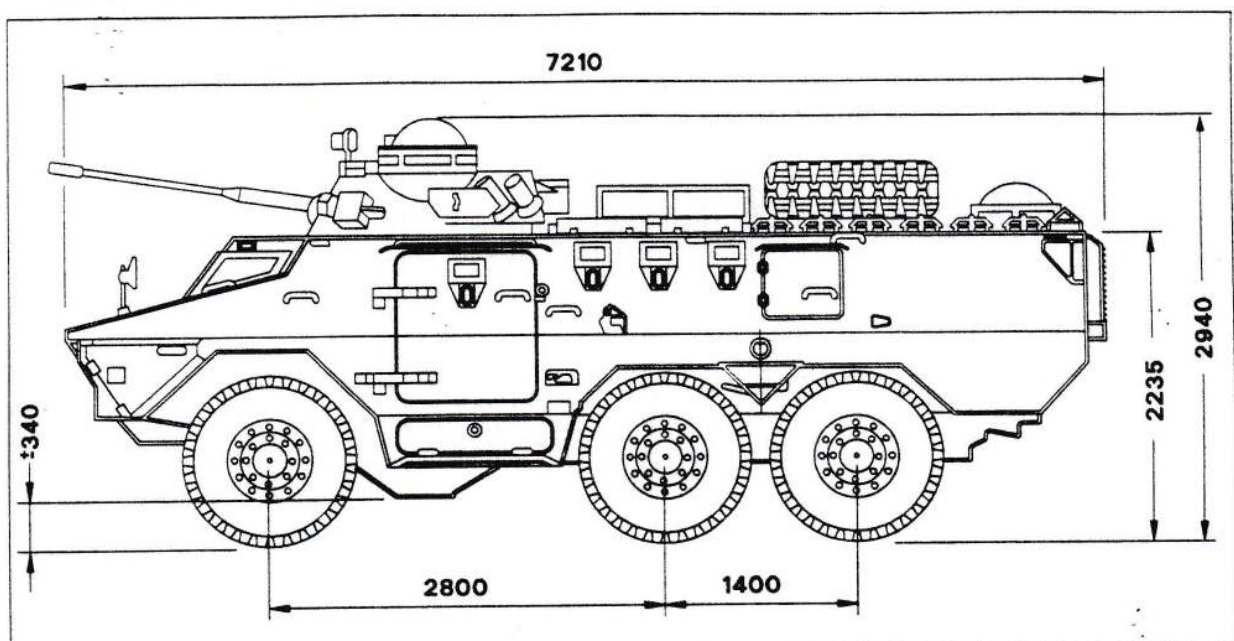
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# Message from the Chairman

**Johan Booysen**

Dear Members

After a challenging start to August, we are glad to report the following.

## ***Memorial Parade 2023***

WOW!!!!!! Manus Myburgh has done it once again. This year was one of the best that I have ever attended. The feedback we received afterwards was very positive and we were complimented in the Professional manner in which the Parade was set up. Well done to Manus who has once again shown that “We Will Remember Them.”

This project was the base of bigger things to come as we are now involving the direct families of our Brothers that paid the highest price.

Cape Town also had a stunning Parade and set the sights high for the next to come by arranging a well-oiled machine, one of the best Parades outside of Johannesburg. Well done to Jannie and his team.

We want to encourage the Members to please join in with the various areas and help us build the legacy of 61 Mech into the future. There is a future for 61 and its history. It is up to us to ensure that we keep 61 MVA as one of the ground leaders of Veteran Associations.

Retired General Roland De Vries made the comment in the AGM that it is now the time to set up a shadow youth team to start their involvement into ensuring the Legacy of all our Brothers and 61 MVA. As most of you are aware the Born of 61 Group is functional and operational for some time now. This is the future youth that we need to encourage to take 61 into the future. I want to ask you to please encourage your kids to join this group on Facebook or make contact with Tammy on 0765753102 for the link. Age doesn't matter. It is the passion of the preservation of our History that counts.

## ***EXCO***

All members remained in their positions and were re elected at the AGM 19TH OF August 2023. This year the AGM was held after the Parade, but will be returned to its normal position of pre-Parade from next year. Thank you to all who attended.

## ***Memorabilia.***

As it was explained in the financial presentation by Kevin West, we are relying on the Memorabilia to help with shortfalls in our financial obligations towards expenses. Membership is just not strong enough on its own to grow 61 MVA and its vision



for the years to come. Please visit our online platform or contact [admin@61mech.org.za](mailto:admin@61mech.org.za) for a link to the store. New clothing and other items are available on this platform.

We thank each and every one of our members for their loyalty and trust which you invest in 61MVA and the Exco.

Mech Greetings,

Johan Booysen



### **OPERATION ASKARI – 40 YEARS COMMEMORATIVE COIN**

The 61 Mech Ops Askari special numbered commemorative coin for the 40 years anniversary. This coin forms part of a Series of 61 Mech Commemorative Coins.

The price of the Askari coin is R300 plus courier cost of R109 PostNet to PostNet.

Payments can be made to:

Account Name: 61 Mech Battalion Group Veterans Association  
Bank Name: Standard Bank SA,  
Branch Code: 006305  
Account Number: 00 329 366 1  
Reference: Askari coin + Your Name

NOTE: Send proof of payment, your contact information and nearest PostNet to:  
[admin@61mech.org.za](mailto:admin@61mech.org.za)



# Annual General Meeting

**Robert Torrani**

This year EXCO decided to try something different with the AGM and we tried holding it after the Memorial Parade. In previous years the AGM was held at 8 am before the memorial parade and we found we were always rushed and not enough time to discuss all things thoroughly. We held the AGM after the memorial at 13h00 in the conference room at the Ditsong Museum.

There was a decent turnout and a couple of important things were discussed and presented to those present. Kevin West took us through the finances and as a veteran association we are looking very good and we have helped a lot of members through our buddy fund. There is still room for improvement with regards to our paid up members renewing their memberships and we hope to get better results this year.

A lifelong membership was presented by Kevin to help ease some admin work, it would entail a payment of a yet to be determined amount and this would then be your membership for life, you would then display a “Black Messie” as indication of your lifelong membership instead of the current “Red Messie”. There would be a bit more investigation into costings and members resolved that once EXCO had done that, then EXCO could make a final decision.

The important function of fundraising was also discussed and EXCO has been charged with putting together a Fundraising guidelines package that would manage how all fundraising

would be done and how those funds will be disbursed. All agreed with having guidelines and that funds raised are for EXCO to decide on where and how they are utilised and that funds raised must be used for benefit of all members.

The Museum display was discussed and we would be upgrading our display. It would be a more digital and we are hoping to find more space to increase our display. We sit with some things not on display as we have a shortage of space.

We have been given the go ahead to also redo our website. It will be more interactive and we will be using it more for sharing info and communication with our members. The new website will be more user friendly and will also help with keeping track of our membership and communicating with members on their renewals etc.

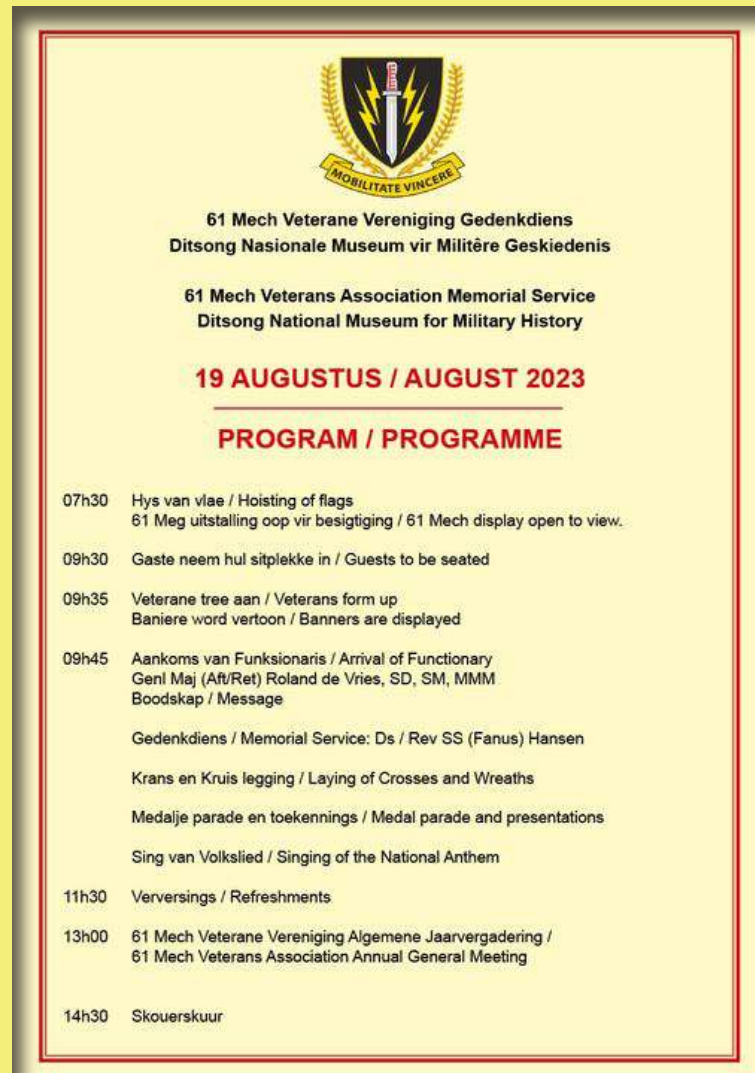
A special mention was made for Thanks and our gratitude to Greg De Ricquebourg and Enertec Batteries for their sponsorship of the batteries to start “Sarge” enabling us to drive Sarge on to the parade area. “Sarge” is the first ratel produced and on display at the museum.

The current EXCO team were all voted back into their respective positions. The AGM ran smoothly and all left with a better understanding of where we are as an Veteran organisation and our plans going forward.

## EXCO

|                           |                         |              |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Veteran Johan Booysen     | Chairman                | 082 451 8676 |
| Col (Ret) Jaap Steyn, MMM | Projects                | 082 927 5890 |
| Veteran Kevin West        | Finances                | 084 647 7992 |
| Veteran Manus Myburgh     | Memorial Services       | 082 490 1653 |
| Veteran Robert Torrani    | Communication/Secretary | 073 671 6826 |
| Rev Fanus Hansen          | Chaplain                | 071 297 4007 |

# 61 MVA Annual Memorial Parade Ditsong - 19 August 2023



## *61 Mechanised Battalion Group (61 Mech) Extraordinaire – Strength, honour, and Faith*

*By: Roland de Vries*

To the management committee of the 61 Mech Veterans Association, our veteran friends, friends of our veterans and families,

It is a privilege to extend a word of sincere appreciation to you for the invitation to attend the 61 Mech remembrance parade at the Ditsong National War Museum last Saturday on the 19th of August 2023 and to act as your functionary.

Attending a 61 Mech parade is always a special memorable moment filling one with modesty and thankfulness!

It is always a poignant moment when we bow our heads in silence to remember our fallen, those who were wounded and our soldiers who are still alive – all of the latter who have served with dignity!

As we grow older, I believe that is time to gradually pass over the baton of 61 Mech to the younger generation to keep the spirit and legacy of 61 Mech alive – we owe it for posterity!

I wish to say to 61 Mech, also as a member for being part of an amazing kinship: We have in the past as an operational unit and presently as a veterans' association always pursued a purpose larger than ourselves, which can be described by the words .... Stoic determination, tenacity of purpose, grit, bravery, resilience, esprit de core, maintaining faith, and in doing so with extraordinary perseverance ... also in battle – the 'vasbyt factor'!

We will always be seeking forward ground - do not waver or falter or fear as we enter an uncertain future, form centres of strength and remain strong in Faith!

Our strength lies in mobility, our people and faith – Mobilitate Vincere!

God Bless 61 Mech, the people in our land, our former foes and beloved South Africa!

















# Posthumous Awards for our Fallen

## 19 August 2023

**Wayne Riddell – Master of Ceremony**

There is honouring the fallen and then there is honouring the Fallen of 61 Mechanised Battalion Veterans Association.

The annual 61 Memorial Parade at the Ditsong Museum was again a mould breaking event this year. Besides the weather playing it's part with a gracious serving of sunshine the Veterans Association had a gracious serving of it's own.

This years functionary was none other than;

Maj General (Ret) Roland de Vries, SD, SM, MMM

General de Vries, is a former deputy chief of the South African army. Roland's 37-year career in the South African army included the South African/Angolan/Namibian border war, which lasted for 23 years from 1966 to 1989.

During this period, he held several command positions of which the operational command of the well-known 61 Mechanised Battalion group, during the border war, was one.

Until recently, Roland de Vries taught annually at the Australian command and staff college in Canberra, during which the conduct of several modern warfare varieties was discussed and analysed. Unfortunately, as with so many other lives, businesses and ventures, covid-19 interrupted it.

He is the author of several publications related to the military and security environment, including three books entitled: - Mobile Warfare -

a perspective for Southern Africa (published in 1987), his life story Eye of the Firestorm (published in 2013 by both Naledi SA and Helion books UK) and Mobile Warfare for Africa, published by Helion books in England in August 2017.

For the past five years, Roland has been involved voluntarily as an independent consultant in a project, where he supports communities with the planning and implementation of initiatives for community safety. The latter is not conducted as a business, but from his personal conviction, in faith, under guidance of our heavenly farther.

His book 'Veiligheid vir Gemeenskappe' (safety for communities) was published by Naledi in August 2020.

When Roland took to the stage, he broke with tradition and stepped into the centre of the area and paid a personal tribute to our fallen. He reminisced fondly of the battles past while including Senior officers and ordinary soldiers in his narrative. This personal and heartfelt message to the audience set the tone beautifully for what was to follow.

Last year, the Memorial Parade saw the resurrecting of Ratel chasses 001 that is housed at the museum for generations to come. Veteran Jan Voster breathed life into it after more than 10 years of not starting. The parade honoured the late Colonel JT "SARGE" Nell as the father of the ratel by finding a new name for chassis 001- SARGE.

This year the Veterans Association stepped it up to another new high by taking the decision to honour our fallen brothers in a way not yet done.

61 Mechanised Battalion Group existed for just 27 years, but in that short lifetime it participated in no less than 37 large-scale actions and operations, earning a well-deserved name as one of the finest fighting units in South Africa's military annals.

Since then, until 2005 thousands of soldiers entered and exited the gates of this unit, whether it was at Omuthiya, Rooikop or Lohatla. The 61 Mech veterans, who served during all these different periods are now united again as members of the 61 Mech Veterans Association where they treasure the history of this unit and commemorate the memory of their fallen brothers with dignity.

An astounding 105 soldiers lost their lives serving 61 Mech. With the untimely deaths of these soldiers, they were never awarded the coveted 61 Mech 'Geel Messie', the operational prophecy badge indicating participation in a formal operation.

The 61 Mech Veterans Association had reached out to all the living Commanding Officers and asked their permission and blessing to reach out to the families of our fallen brothers and present to them their loved ones the 'Geel Messie' posthumously. 61 Mech Veterans Association is the custodians of the 'Geel Messie', an honour they achieved last year, with the blessing of the South African National Defence Force.

By doing this, the association, as fellow brothers, and veterans acknowledge the role that these lost brothers had played in the history of 61 Mech. With this presentation, they want to get the loved ones to join the yearly Memorial Services where we commemorate the memory of our fallen brothers. They will never be forgotten!

The 61 MVA have designed a symbolic wooden triangle with the 61 Mech Veterans As-

sociation emblem embroidered in gold thread plus an original 'Geel Messie' below that.

This represents the folded flag that is handed to the next of kin during the funeral of a deceased soldier. The members Number, Name, Rank, date of death and in which Operation the member lost his life, is engraved at the bottom of the triangle. This gesture is a symbol from the members of the 61 Mech Veterans Assoc to show their appreciation for our fallen brothers honourable and faithful service to 61 Mechanised Battalion Group and our Country.

To say that there was not a dry eye in the house would be an understatement. The 61 MVA have taken on this mammoth task as a journey and not a destination. They intend to attempt to track down surviving family of all 105 Fallen during the Border War.

The parade then moved on to another posthumous award. It was that of a K9 Soldier. Over the last few years our Veteran and other Organisations Memorial Services and Parades where graced by a special participant. A participant who touched each of us dearly. That participant was K9 - Markus and his handler TIN Veteran Roché Vermaak. Markus took part at the said Memorials in remembrance of all the animals who died in service of Armed Forces during the SA Border War. Markus also took part at our 2022 Memorial Service.

Markus sadly passed away on 30 April 2023. The 61 Mech Veterans Association decided to honour Markus for his service. They called on his handler, Veteran Roché Vermaak with Markus's successor, K9-Inga, to come forward and receive a special award in recognition of his service.

Again, not a dry eye in the house. The memorial parade had undoubtedly raised the bar to new heights and set a trend for others to follow. What an honour to be part of the 61 Mech Veteran Association.







# HONOURING OUR FALLEN 61 MECH BROTHERS



61 Mechanised Battalion Group existed for just 27 years, but in that short lifetime it participated in no less than 37 large-scale actions and operations, earning a well-deserved name as one of the finest fighting units in South Africa's military annals.

We were honoured with the presence of family members and/or friends of 9 of our fallen heroes. We proceeded with the awarding of the awards. We pause with great pride and deep gratitude for the courage and for their immense sacrifices.

## *We remember:*

74556416PE Lt G van Zyl

Lt Van Zyl passed away on 4 November 1981 during Operation Daisy in Southern Angola.

The 61 Mechanised Battalion Group's Proficiency Badge is hereby awarded Posthumously to Lt Van Zyl.

Col (Ret) Gert Van Zyl, SM, MMM, Cousin to Lt Van Zyl, came forward and received the award on behalf of their family. Col Van Zyl was the 3rd Commanding Officer of the 61 Mechanised Battalion Group and is presently the Patron of the 61 Mech Veterans Association.

## *We remember:*

79576542BG Gunner CF Bezuidenhout  
&  
80526940BG Gunner J Bosse

Gunners Bezuidenhout and Bosse were best friends for life – they both grew up in the Abraham Kriel Children's Home in Potchefstroom. They attended die Hoër Volksskool, Potchefstroom and started their Military Training on the same day in the same Unit. They then became part of the 61 Mechanised Battalion Group.

Gunners Bezuidenhout and Bosse died in the same incident on the 6th March 1983 during Operation Phoenix in Southern Angola. The 61 Mechanised Battalion Group's Proficiency Badge is hereby awarded Posthumously to Gunner Bezuidenhout and Gunner Bosse.

Die Hoër Volksskool, Potchefstroom have recently unveiled a special Memorial Area for their fallen fellow students. Mr Stephan Pieters and Mr Pieter du Preez came forward and received the awards on behalf of the school, where the awards will become part of the Memorial Display.

Mr Pieters is a former fellow scholar of the Volksskool and is currently a teacher at the school. Mr Du Preez is also a former scholar and a former chairman of the School's Governing Body.

### *We remember:*

80238660BG Rfn GA Lennox

Rfn Lennox passed away on 4 January 1984 during Operation Askari in Southern Angola.

The 61 Mechanised Battalion Group's Proficiency Badge is hereby awarded Posthumously to Rfn Lennox.

Rfn Lennox's father Leon, asked Veteran Eugene Liebenberg, who also served during Operation Askari, to receive the award on behalf of their family. Veteran Liebenberg to come forward and receive the award.

### *We remember:*

81285504BG Rfn JL Pretorius

Rfn Pretorius also passed away on 4 January 1984 during Operation Askari in Southern Angola.

The 61 Mechanised Battalion Group's Proficiency Badge is hereby awarded Posthumously to Rfn Pretorius.

Mrs Madie van der Merwe, sister of Rfn Pretorius, to come forward and received the award on behalf of their family.

### *We remember:*

81059750BG Cpl JH Roets

Cpl Roets also passed away on 23 January 1984 during Operation Askari in Southern Angola.

The 61 Mechanised Battalion Group's Proficiency Badge is hereby awarded Posthumously to Cpl Roets.

Mr Kobus Roets, brother of Cpl Roets, asked that a fellow Askari soldier, Veteran came and received the award on behalf of their family.

### *We remember:*

84477751BG Rfn VV Nieuwenhuizen

Rfn Nieuwenhuizen passed away on 14 February 1988 during Operation Hoper in Southern Angola.

The 61 Mechanised Battalion Group's Proficiency Badge is hereby awarded Posthumously to Rfn Nieuwenhuizen.

Mrs Hanneltjie Kruger, sister of Rfn Nieuwenhuizen, and members of her family came forward and received the award.

### *We remember:*

85263262BG Rfn AS Groenewald

Rfn Groenewald also passed away on 14 February 1988 during Operation Hoper in Southern Angola.

The 61 Mechanised Battalion Group's Proficiency Badge is hereby awarded Posthumously to Rfn Groenewald.

Mrs Elzane Nel, sister of Rfn Groenewald, and members of her family to come forward and received the award.

### *We remember:*

84588185PE Lt CP Els

Lt Els passed away on 3 April 1988 during Operation Merlyn in Southern Angola.

The 61 Mechanised Battalion Group's Proficiency Badge is hereby awarded Posthumously to Lt Els.

Mr Martin Els, father of Lt Els, and members of his family to come forward and received the award.





### • Military Regions and Sectors of the Western Sub-Theatre of War

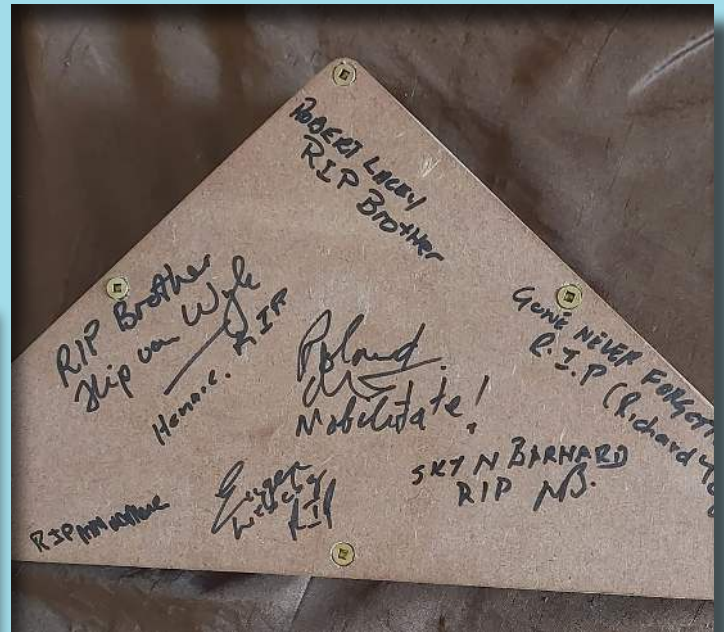




*Chris Barnard - Ek het vanoggend Kpl. J H Roets se broer Kobus Roets ontmoet en die oorhandiging gedoen. Kobus bedank ook 61 MVV vir die huldeblyk en moeite wat aangegaan is met sy broer. Hy waardeer dit opreg. 22 Augustus*







A group of eight people are posed for a photograph outdoors on a grassy area. On the far left, a man in a dark blue military jacket and white trousers stands with his arm around the shoulder of the man next to him. This second man is also in a military uniform, wearing a white shirt and light-colored trousers. In the center, a woman in a black top and dark trousers holds a framed certificate. Next to her, a man in a dark blue jacket and jeans also holds a framed certificate. To his right, another man in a blue jacket and jeans stands with his hands clasped. Further right, a man in a dark jacket and jeans stands with his hands clasped. Next to him, a man in a light-colored hoodie with 'REDWOOD STATE LEAGUE' printed on it stands with his arm around the man on the far right. The man on the far right is wearing a plaid shirt and grey trousers. In the background, a building with large windows and a sign that reads 'REDWOOD STATE LEAGUE' is visible.



# AUCTION / VEILING

The annual auction of 61 Mech collectables in aid of the Back-A-Buddy project, was planned for the 19 August 2023 at the AGM. After due consideration it was decided to give all our members a fair opportunity to bid on some of these very collectable items. We moved the auction to an online platform. The auction will be active for 3 weeks starting on 28 August until 17 September.

Participants to follow the developments on the 61 MVA Facebook page.

## AUCTION ITEM

19 August 2023 at the AGM 14:00



**Ratel: The Making of a Legend  
Volume 1 & Volume 2**

**Hardcase copies / Special Editions: Proof Volumes**

These were pre-production proof copies of Volume 1 and Volume 2 that was printed and bound to test the paper, size, weight, etc. for the final print run of the 150 sets of Hardcase Special Editions Volumes.

For those afar who cannot be there on the 19th, bids can be made telephonically on the day. Send message to 082 490 1653 / 082 927 5890 / 082 451 8676 to register

## VEILING ITEM

19 Augustus 2023 by die AJV 14:00

### Ratel 20

Skaalmodel Ratel 20 Bevelsvoertuig gebou deur RSM HG Smith vir Jaap Steyn

Indien jy nie by die AJV kan wees nie, kan jy aanlyn bide op enige van die items. Stuur jou kontakligting na enige van die volgende nommers om te registreer:

082 490 1653 / 082 927 5890 / 082 451 8676



## AUCTION ITEM

61 Mechanised Battalion Group  
Officer Commanding Replica Knife

**No. 1/61**

Cmdt JM Dippenaar  
1st OC: 1979 - 1981



Auction Date  
19 August 2023 at the AGM 14:00  
Reserve Price - R10,000

For those afar who cannot be there on the 19th, bids can be made telephonically on the day. Send message to 082 490 1653 / 082 927 5890 / 082 451 8676 to register

## AUCTION ITEM

61 Mechanised Battalion Group  
Officer Commanding Replica Knife

**No. 2/61**

Cmdt Roland de Vries  
2nd OC: 1981 - 1983



Auction Date  
19 August 2023 at the AGM 14:00  
Reserve Price - R10,000

For those afar who cannot be there on the 19th, bids can be made telephonically on the day. Send message to 082 490 1653 / 082 927 5890 / 082 451 8676 to register

## AUCTION ITEM

**Special Mug donated by  
Brig Genl Tony Savides**

40mm 'Snotneus' Grenade Launcher Shell with a R4 rifle cartridge – made from aluminium by Armscor for a special Smokeshell Function in the 80's. Genl Savides's name engraved on the mug.





# *61 MVA Annual Memorial Parade*

## *Western Cape 19 August - Andrew Whitaker*



The parade was attended by approximately 35 61 mech veterans, together with some wives and family members. As special guests we had family members of 61 veterans that had been killed in action and a motor vehicle accident while serving.

The parade begun, with the normal forming up of veterans, the march past of flag bearers and the laying of wreaths. Bag piper Ramon Allen playing at the appropriate times.



Then a very special presentation of 61 Triangles;

To the family of 76338946BG Rifleman Francios Loubser, killed in Ratel 21 during Operation Sceptic, on 10 June 1980. His triangle was presented by Mike Beyl to his mother Lorna Loubser, who was accompanied by his brother, uncle and niece.

To the family of 78487702BT Rifleman Johan Carel Fourie, Killed during Operation Askari on 31 December 1983, when he was hit by an RPG7. His triangle was presented by Jasper Cloete, his Corporal during National service to Loretta Swart, who was engaged to him when he was killed.

To the family of Rifleman Anthony Uytenbo-gaard who was killed in a motor vehicle accident 30km outside Bloemfontein on 15 December 1980, 3 days before he was due to complete his National Service. His triangle was presented by Martiens Van Der Merwe, his platoon sergeant, to his sister Avril Van Den Heever.

The parade concluded with a flypast of 4 small aircraft. The parade was followed by an interesting talk on the Russia – Ukraine conflict, by Professor Abel Esterhuizen



of the Military Academy in Saldana Bay.

Tea, cake and boerewors rolls were then served.

Congratulations to Gerard Van Rooyen and all those that assisted in putting together a really special event











## *Jannie Nieuwoudt*

Die Weskaapsegment van die 61 MVV nooi alle Weskapenaars, Suidkapenaars, Noordkapenaars en Karoonaars wat by ons wil inskakel vir Parades en Skouerskure, om met my kontak te maak sodat ek u op ons Whatsapp-groep kan sit. Hierop word alle reëlins en inligting deurgegee rakende 61 en sy mense. Kontak my gerus per WA op 084 397 9619 of per e-pos [cederwater.wam@gmail.com](mailto:cederwater.wam@gmail.com)



# 61MVA KZN – Memorial Parade 19 August 2023

*Anthony Turton*

A successful memorial parade was held at Gwahumbe Lodge near Mid Illovo, KZN on Saturday 19th August. This was a regional affair with its roots in the Covid lockdown when travel was impossible. Gwahumbe was selected because it offers a beautiful setting for formal occasions such as this, while also providing camping facilities in isolated locations along the iLovu River.

The formal portion of the event was in a new conference family, rebuilt after a catastrophic fire that destroyed Gwahumbe after its first use as a venue for 61MVA KZN. With a stunning view over the mountains and into the valley, with giraffe, zebra, wildebeest, and impala always present, the first portion of the memorial parade was conducted.

The master of ceremonies was Anton Müller, and the Parade Sergeant Major was Hilgard Coetzee. Three guest speakers provided an interesting insight into different aspects of the SADF. Lt Col (Ret) Gary Williams, the log officer for Modular, paid tribute to the role of national servicemen during the Bush War. Lt Col



(Ret) Annemarie Steyn, presented an insightful talk into the role of women in browns, from her vantage point as the OC of the training base at Heidelberg during and after the 1994 transition period. She also spoke with authority on the role of women in signals intelligence.



This was followed with a riveting talk by her husband, Lt Col (Ret) Douw Steyn, on special forces vis-à-vis the rest of the SADF. His insight into the tactical lessons learned from the deployment to D Squadron SAS on what was known as the “Russian Front” in southern Mozambique, when Lt Kokkie du Toit was KIA, and the subsequent founding of 4 Recce as a specialist waterborne unit, had the audience fully engaged.

The parade then moved outdoors after lunch. Five new medals were formally presented by Lt Col (Ret) Douw Steyn as the ranking officer, assisted by Capt (Ret) Anton Müller. These were awarded as follows: JJ Hull (Pro Patria), PJ Marx (SA Medal), JN Nell (SA Medal), B Petersen (Pro Patria), and CC Wareham (General Service Medal). Two of the re-



cipients were present, the other three were recognized in absentia and their medals will be forwarded to them by appropriate means. This was followed by a formal patching ceremony for Noel Coetzee, a new member of 61 Riders. Fellowship was engaged around the fireplace in the beautifully appointed dining room and bar at Gwahumbe, so that the day visitors could gain maximum benefit from their commitment to drive long distances to attend a memorial event in a remote but beautiful setting.

Those who were staying for the weekend retired down to the private camp facility at the Hippo Pool, where a great party was held around a raging fire. It was under the glorious African night sky that the machete was again brought out, by popular demand from the veterans.

This has become a 61MVA KZN tradition now, with strong support from a popular base. The objective is to provide closure for every conscripted soldier by recognizing their role in the Bush War. The only rule is that the person holding the machete has the right to speak about whatever they wish to ventilate, for as long as is needed. The holder of the machete may not be interrupted while he speaks. This has proven to be an effective way to enable each veteran to deal with whatever demons they have, in a dignified way, among brothers who probably have similar feelings.

No man is left behind, and all are recognized irrespective of the role they once played. This tradition has grown naturally, so it is likely to remain for as long as veterans are alive to share their hopes and fears among the band of brothers that call 61MVA their home.





# Augustus Rapport

## August Report

*Riana V D Westhuizen - 16 August*

I was blessed to meet up with Kobus Nel , his wife Pauli and her lovely parents last night. Kobus give me a stunning present that I will treasure for ever. I love the cross Kobus. Thank you all for such a lovely experience. Thank you, thank you!!



*Pierre de Jager - 61 Meg soldate trap in Wellington*





*Pierre de Jager 15 Augustus - 61 Meg Veterane trap Trans Baviaans.  
Johan Moelich, Carina Burger, Cordre Smith , Pierre de Jager en  
Hannes Basson .*



*Jan Vorster 12 August - Thank you Enertek and Gregory For the Spon-  
soring of Two Batteries, To Get 11C Going Again for this Year's Memorial  
Parade.!!*





*Nicole Dickson - My son, a Rifleman in the British Army joined my husband Graham Dickson at the 61 Mech Memorial Parade 19 August.*



*Mike Beyl - 28 August - Two 61 Rider Warriors, two 61 affiliates, two Scooters, a half loaf and a Coke. Keeping the Western Cape alive.*





*Andrew Whitaker - I attended the 75th Helicopter reunion today and met up with a few pilots that supported us during the attack on Smokeshell. Wonderful meeting Andy Freeman - Bosbok pilot at the time, Johan Merts - Alo pilot and Theuns Meyer - Puma pilot. Also great to meet up with a good number of the 32 veterans. I was privileged to be awarded a certificate from 32 veterans. A real honour. 27 August*



*Deb Lyn and Kevin - 61 buddies in Australia*

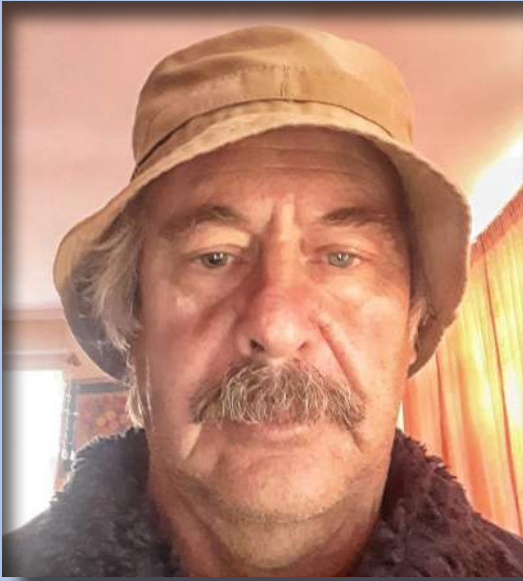


*Carina Burger en Moela - Baviaanskloof  
26 August*



# 61 ners op Boshloed Dag

## 26 August



*Adriaan Kriel*



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*James Glendenning*



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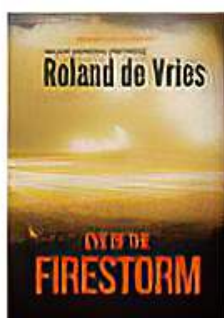
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Goni-maj (Alt) Roland de Vries



**Eye of the  
Firestorm**

ISBN  
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Die lewensverhaal van Roland de Vries handel nie net oor Oorlogvoering in Afrika nie maar ook oor die lewe, hoop, sekuriteit, bevel, leierskap en transformasie. Die leser word telkens verras oor die Grensoorlog soos nuwe insigte gedeel word.

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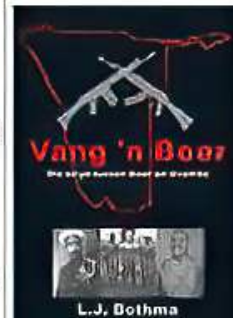
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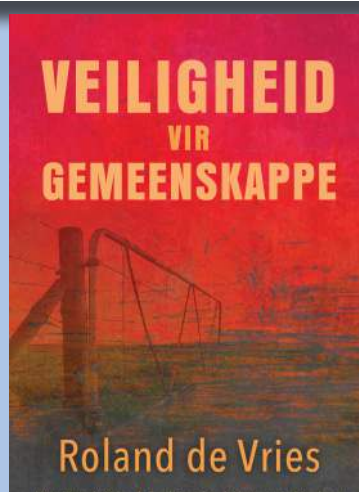
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Vang 'n Boer – Die stryd tussen Boer en Ovambo, is die verhaal van twee volke waarvan die paale meer as 80 vóór die Grensoorlog/War of Liberation (1966-89) die eerste maal gekruis het.

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# Die 61 Meg Bergfiets Entoesias

## Trapfiets Voordele

Deur net 5 minute van jou dag fiets te trap, kan 'n goeie manier wees om gewigstoename te voorkom, veral vir individue wat die middeljare nader. Dit is belangrik om te onthou dat enige vorm van oefening beter is as geen oefening nie. Fietsry bied nie net fisiese voordele nie, maar stel jou ook in staat om ander gesondheidsvoordele te geniet. So, wat kan 'n paar minute se fietsry elke dag vir jou doen?

Volgens 'n onlangse studie oor bejaarde pasiënte met kniepyn en osteoartritis, het die insluiting van fietsry by hul roetines gelei tot vinniger herstel en verbeterde toestande. Dit demonstreer dat, namate ons ouer word, selfs om net 10 minute per dag aan oefening te wy ons gesondheid grootliks kan bevoordeel.

Dit word algemeen erken dat oefening, veral fietsry, 'n persoon se selfbeeld baie kan verbeter. Dit is 'n goed gevestigde feit. As jy 'n vleierende beeld van jouself ervaar stel jou liggaam aansienlike hoeveelhede geluk-induserende hormone vry. En wat beteken dit vir jou? Jy sal die hele dag 'n verhoogde gevoel van welsyn ervaar.

'n Onlangse studie wat oor 'n tydperk van 5 jaar gedoen is, het aan die lig gebring dat uit die 1 500 deelnemers, diegene wat aan daaglikse fisieke aktiwiteit deelgeneem het, 'n 30% laer risiko gehad het om hoë bloeddruk te ontwikkel. Daarbenewens kan intensiewe fietsry-oefensessies net so effektief wees om hoë bloeddruk te verminder as om voorskryfmedikasie te neem. Daarom, benewens die neem van jou voorgeskrewe medikasie, waarom dit nie oorweeg om 'n kort 10-minute fiets-

rysessie by jou daaglikse roetine in te sluit nie?

Gewigsverlies is 'n algemene voordeel van gereelde fietsry. Terwyl die media dikwels die belangrikheid van dieet beklemtoon om vet te verloor, vertel wetenskaplike navorsing 'n ander storie. Onlangse studies het getoon dat ouer diabetiese vroue slegs hul ingewande vet kan verminder as hulle hul dieet met daaglikse oefening kombineer. Daarbenewens het navorsing bevind dat aërobiese oefeninge soos fietsry oorgewig individue kan help om skadelike vette af te skud.

Oefening is bekend vir sy vermoë om stres te verminder. Hierdie feit word algemeen erken. Boonop het 'n onlangse studie verdere bevestiging verskaf dat veral fietsry een van die doeltreffendste aktiwiteite is om stres te verminder. Of jy kies om alleen of saam met vriende te ry, om bloot 'n fietsrit te geniet, kan jou geestesgesondheid aansienlik verbeter en bydra tot 'n groter aantal goeie dae in jou lewe.

Volgens 'n studie op 'n groep fietsryers is gevind dat fietsry 'n ryer se lewensduur verhoog. Veteraan-fietsryers kon gemiddeld tot 81 jaar leef, vergeleke met die algemene bevolking se gemiddelde lewensduur van 73 jaar.

As jy meer intense voordele van fietsry wil ervaar, oorweeg dit om eerder aan hoëvlakfietsry deel te neem. Navorsing het getoon dat fietsryaktiwiteite met hoë-intensiteit-intervalle aansienlike anti-verouderingsvoordele kan bied, selfs op sellulêre vlak. Daarbenewens is ontdek dat individue wat aan hoë-intensiteit fietsry en ander oefeninge deelneem, 'n toename in mitochondriale kapasiteit ervaar. 'n Afname in mitochondria kan ook tot fisiese agteruitgang lei. In eenvoudiger terme, hoe beter jou mitochondria kan funksioneer, hoe meer energie sal jy voel.

*(Verwerk uit Bodyhub)*



## TOURING THE ANGOLA BATTLEFIELDS ON A MOUNTAIN BIKE 2012 EXTRACTS FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF PAUL MORRIS – 61 MECH 1987

### *The Conception of the Idea - 2010*

So my plan is to undertake a long distance cycle ride. Over the years I've done a lot of traveling and by various means on differing budgets.

The point of this trip is people. Cars go too fast and can insulate one from the travel experience. I haven't been on a motorcycle for twenty years so I'd likely kill myself if I tried something like this on one now. Walking is my preferred way of getting in touch with the landscape and with people but to cover great distances one needs almost unlimited time.

I could use public transport but I have a strong urge to do this journey under my own steam. And if I'm to undertake a sponsored journey, I'm not sure folks will part with money for me to catch a bus from Luanda to Namibia!

A bicycle then. On a bicycle I can cover great distances at a pace that allows me to take in the country, to breathe it, feel it and live in it. It also enables human contact in a way that traveling by car or motorcycle cannot possibly rival. It's also an affordable option. Now the question is, can I do it? Will my body be capable of it rather than is the journey possible by bike?

### *My Bucket List*

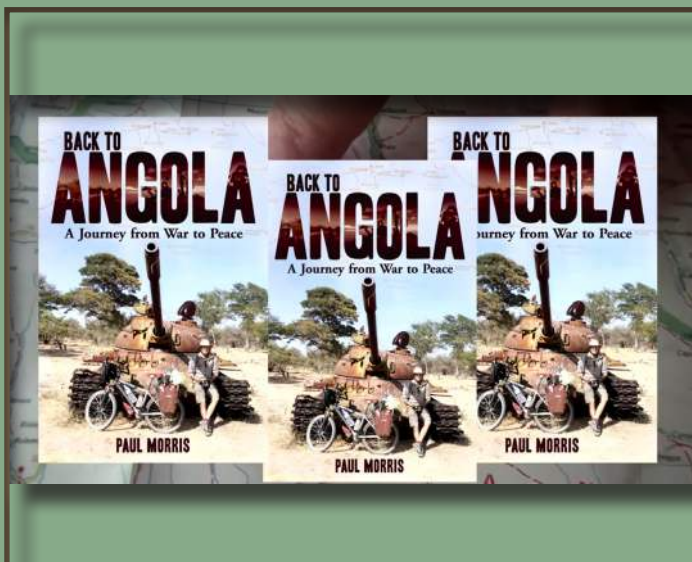
From Cuito Cuanevale I want to get to Mavinga. This town was strategically important for UNITA. The airfield helped keep the rebels and the SADF supplied. Just north of the town is where I saw my first real fighting and took part in the important battle on the Lomba River.

Mavinga is a prize because I would cross the Lomba River just north of the town. The river was a prize back in 1987 too. It is a natural buffer, a geographical stop-line for the defence of Mavinga. It was also the scene of probably the most trying day of my life. The place where I spent an entire day in the middle of some of the most intense fighting of the war and at times I thought I would die there.

I didn't die there, but many men did. I really want to see that river again. It seems an important part of what you might call my quest; maybe going there will help to put some of the ghosts to rest. But I won't risk losing my life for the experience; one day of close shaves on the Lomba is enough for this lifetime.

The road from Cuito to Mavinga is, from what I've been able to learn, a bad road of deep sand. I'm not going to be able to cycle it. It may be possible to hitch a lift on a truck and as long as I can satisfy myself that this road is free of landmines, this is what I'll do.

In a way, this place marks the beginning of the journey towards my personal heart of darkness, that piece of wilderness between Cuito Cuanevale and Mavinga where I spent three months experiencing emotions on the fear/terror continuum.





## *A New Old Bike and Reversible Brakes*

I've found a bike for training on in Johannesburg. It's nothing fancy. It's scratched and scraped but everything is where it should be - mostly! - and works. It's got V-brakes, front shocks (lockable) and it's got the little holes needed to fit a carrier. It doesn't have a steel frame but I'm giving up on that requirement for now.

In short, it's a perfect bike for my Jo'burg training and if it feels right, I might use it for Angola. It was also very cheap - is that the catch?

There's one small snag - currently being sorted out by the bike shop - which I found out when I test rode the bike and nearly flew over the handle-bars. The brake levers on many mountain bikes these days are the opposite way around to the way I'm used to. So when I pulled the left hand lever I was engaging the front, not the rear brake. Glad I figured this out in the courtyard behind the bike shop and not hurtling down a mountain!

I've consulted my old flatmate from Hong Kong, the great Steve Coward, who runs a mountain bike tour company, for advice on what I need.

So according to Steve, here's what I need:

A steel framed bike rather than aluminium. Steel can be welded if it breaks, aluminium can't. Only problem is, steel frames are like hen's teeth. Hmm, might have to settle for aluminium but I'll keep looking.

A mid-range bike rather than an expensive one. They usually have holes to fit a carrier, to carry all my gear and are less likely to get stolen.

V-brakes rather than disk brakes. The old fashioned ones are simpler and easier for me to repair if anything goes wrong. I'm mechanically challenged to put it very politely.

Front shock absorbers only, better for touring.

A good touring saddle. This isn't a super big comfy, gel injected thing, but a very slim narrow one. The theory being, I'm told, the less contact the bottom the better.

A set of road tyres and a set of knobbles for the rough sections. Road tyres make for less effort and faster pace on the tar.

## *Postponing*

Several factors have resulted in my decision to postpone the expedition until 2012. But I kept on planning and exercising.

## *Lessons Learnt on my five days Easter Cape bicycle proof run.*

I've stopped for a break on another thigh-burning climb, sun ricocheting off the asphalt. I've replaced my empty water bladder with another and I suck on the mouthpiece. The water has a sour, spicy taste. It's been baking on my carrier in the sun for three days. I'm annoyed that I was too lazy to fill it with fresh water before I left Riebeeck East. I decide not to risk drinking it.

Instead I choose to nurse my bottle of Game for the next two hours until I get back to Bedford. It's a long time to last on three quarters of a litre in temperatures of over thirty degrees, but it seems better than getting ill while still on the road. The morning started on the gravel road out of Riebeeck East and then through the gates into the game reserve to take a short cut which would save me over 20 kilometres.

The morning clouds had burnt off before I'd even swung my leg over the crossbar. Sweat dripped off my nose.

The road from Grahamstown to Bedford is a quiet one. Thorn bushes encroach onto the tar and every now and then I swerve grudgingly to avoid a puncture. I'm conscious of my dwindling water supply and also of my need to eat. On the first two days of the



tour I hadn't eaten enough because I discovered that getting my panniers open was difficult with the tent and sleeping bag strapped on top. I suffered for my laziness. During the final 10 to 15 kilometres my energy hopped over the barbed wire fence and skipped off into the fields leaving me as weak as a baby.

On the final day, to solve the snack problem, I strapped my bum-bag onto the top of my gear and filled it with snacks. Now the problem was finding a shady spot to have a food break. The thorn-bushes seemed to grow from the bottom, leaving no space for me to get underneath. The midday sun cast no sha-

dows. I sit next to my bike scraping at the bit of shade cast by my panniers. Curious drivers stare as they speed by. Some even wave.

The four day tour was instructive. I've learned that I need to cut down on my already minimal kit. Less weight equals easier kilometres. I'm still not eating enough on the road, I need more snacks. I need to take some breaks rather than hammering along for hours on end, particularly on longer days. Oh yes, I mustn't forget to check that all my kit is securely attached: retracing my route for a couple of kilometres to retrieve aforementioned bum-bag was tedious. And painful!

## Lessons Learnt from the Past

### *A lesson in kit maintenance*

With my trip to Angola approaching, I was in the process of evaluating my bike and my kit. I recall my dilemma which I experienced during Ops Modular.

I crossed the border into Angola knowing that the barrel of my rifle was bent. It had been that way for months. I think it had been slammed in the heavy door of the Ratel, probably during the confusion of a night exercise. I first found out when we were on a shooting-range near Tsumeb when I couldn't figure out why I wasn't even hitting the target. There were literally no holes in it! I was normally a good shot. Then I noticed the dust kicking up way to the left.

I should have taken the rifle to the tiffies but didn't because I feared the consequences. I could have been charged with negligence or something. So I rolled into a war-zone with a rifle that was as good as useless. Dangerous even. I was part of a mortar team so my rifle spent most of its time clipped into the holder next to my seat in the Ratel. I didn't care.

Weeks later, when all hell was breaking loose around me, machine-gun rounds crackling overhead, tanks blasting away at our ar-

moured squadron and exploding mortar and artillery rounds beating the wind from my lungs, I wished my barrel was straight. The order had been given to pull back for a regroup. But one of our vehicles had crash-landed into a deep FAPLA bunker and needed to be towed out. Suddenly the rifleman Ratels were flying past us and we were the front line. Fully expecting the FAPLA infantry to come bursting through the bush, I cocked my rifle, bent barrel and all. Every fibre, every nerve ending, every part of my being was screaming at me to get the hell out of there. But our buddies were stuck in the bunker.

The incoming fire was intense so getting out from behind the relative safety of our armour plating to attach a tow-bar was a terrifying prospect. Instead, our driver Gary, rammed our vehicle into the back of the other Ratel with enough force to push it out of the hole. Then, kicking sprays of Angolan sand into the air he u-turned 18 tons of armour, flattening trees in the process, and raced, engine screaming, after the rest of our battle group.

We regrouped and went back into the attack.

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Following last year's disappointments I'm very excited to be going back to Angola with a group of ex-Umkhonto weSizwe veterans. I've been invited to join an expedition that will be driving from Johannesburg to Cuito Cuanavale to attend the opening of a war museum.

Joining this group simplifies my entry into Angola and will enable me to see parts of Southern Angola that would be inaccessible to me on the bicycle.

From Cuito Cuanavale I will cycle back to the Namibian border as originally planned.

Cuito Cuanavale, an almost mythical place in my war, a place on a map, never seen as I sat not so far away in a foxhole in the Angolan sand. The place I'd chosen to begin my bike journey. I felt surprisingly strong emotions in the few days I spent there. From Cuito Cuanavale to Menongue, the so-called "Road of Death", strewn with the wreckage of war: tanks, APC's, logistics vehicles, hit by air attacks, or rockets or UNITA ambushes. It was a depressing reminder of the utter waste caused by 30 years of war.

My slow progress from those battlefields was mirrored by my slow internal processing and meaning-making; my responses to returning to Angola. Evidence of war decreased with every kilometre beyond Menongue and my thoughts turned slowly from the past and its grim rusting reminders, to the beauty of the bush and the openness of the people I met. I became absorbed in my immediate task of journeying, feeding myself, finding a place to sleep and with every meeting along the way. The war receded both in its manifestation in the landscape, and in my mind. The further I travelled from Cuito, the less I thought about war.



### *Masseca*

It was my first night of what would be a three week bicycle tour of Southern Angola. I'd driven to Cuito Cuanavale with friends and now I was on a solo journey back to the Namibian border.

The village of Masseca is on what was known as "The Road of Death" during the civil war which lasted over thirty years. The reason is clear. The road-side is littered with rusting wrecks of military vehicles and the red and white squares periodically painted on the trees warn of the patient killers buried in the sand: land-mines.

The sun hung low over the ridge as I free-



wheeled down the hill to the river. People were scattered around the flood-plain, washing off a day of work in the cold water of the braided river-channels. Every now and again someone would call a greeting and I'd respond with a "Boa tarde!" and a wave. I stopped my bicycle where a man was standing next to the road. He was in conversation with some young women who were doing their laundry in the river below.

The man returned my greeting and looked me up and down with open curiosity. I wasn't offended. A tourist on a fully-loaded bicycle is probably a sight unseen in this south-eastern corner of Angola. "Administrador por favor?" was as much Portuguese as I could muster. I know I'm supposed to report to the government administrator/mayor in any town I want to spend the night. The man in the new jeans and neat black polo shirt rattles something off and points up the road to where the village spreads to the left of the road. I catch the word *escola*, school. I ask for clarification and after a couple more attempts to give me what I assume are directions to the Administrador he gives up and beckons me to follow him. Outside a roadside tavern sit four young and similarly neatly dressed young men. There's a conversation and another young man takes over as my guide and the first one walks back in the direction of the river. The young clothes-washing women are evidently more interesting than a middle-aged man on a bicycle.

I follow my new guide and his friends deeper into the collection of mud-brick huts. Some of the huts are round with roughly thatched roofs; others are rectangular with roofs of corrugated iron. I now have a growing number of children in train. I feel like a cycling pied-piper. By the time I reach the top of the village there must be over seventy children excitedly chattering and laughing and shoving each other playfully as they swarm around the bike.

I've been struggling to haul my heavy bike through the deep sand and I'm relieved when we finally halt outside a group of rectangular huts. I'm introduced to a man called Benjamin who turns out to be the local school teacher. There is no Administrador so he is the next best thing.

I'm invited into the house, large by the standards of the village. Someone takes my bike and squeezes it through the front door. Another man barks at the large group of curious children. They shriek with laughter and move back a little before crowding in once more. I'm ushered into the front room and we're joined by some of the teacher's family, mostly young adults who I take to brothers and sisters. There's a Formica table and some chairs. A portrait of Angola's President Dos Santos is prominently displayed. My bike is leant against the wall and I am offered a chair. At the square glassless window the faces of older children, who are tall enough to reach, watch us while chattering excitedly.





Benjamin and I try to make conversation but without a common language this is difficult. More so because of the din made by the spectators. He tells them to go away. They back away for a few seconds but their curiosity gets the better of them and soon the window is again crammed with wide-eyed faces. Eventually my host gets up and closes the little wooden window-shutter. It's suddenly quieter but also pitch-black as the little window provided the only light in the room. There's no electricity. Our conversation consists of long pauses between stilted attempts at communication aided by my Portuguese/English dictionary. Eventually I get things moving by pulling out my camera and taking some photographs. I set my camera to automatic by the light of my headtorch. I aim hopefully into the darkness and manage to capture some photographs of the little group. They pass the camera around, delighted at their images on the camera's screen.

I explain carefully that I have my own food and that I don't want to be any further trouble to them. But although I can show them "vegetariano" in the dictionary, it becomes clear that the concept is meaningless in rural Angola. A couple of the young women appear with serving bowls. A bowl of warm water is passed around and Benjamin, two of the older boys and I wash our hands. A large enamel bowl contains pap, the smaller ones hold some dried fish, what looks like pork, and something else I can't make out in the dim torchlight. I need to make a quick decision. I haven't eaten any form of animal flesh in over fifteen years. As a total stranger I am now a guest in the home of

a very generous family. It's clear that I will be sleeping in their home tonight. It would be hard enough turning down this meal which has been specially rustled up for me had I been able to explain sensitively in fluent Portuguese. I decide that refusing this food in the blunt way that my limited Portuguese would allow would be very discourteous. My host expertly rolls some pap into a ball and dips it into one of the dishes. I make my decision and follow his example.

Whatever is in the bowl I choose is delicious. Rich in flavour and tender between my teeth, for a second I think I'm chewing a sundried tomato. Of course, it can't be. But it is quite delicious. I'd hoped that the mystery dish would prove to be a vegetable of some kind. As I make my way through a third morsel of unknown I come to the conclusion that I am eating slivers of marinated goat.

The following morning, after a good night's sleep on a thin mattress in the same room as President Dos Santos, Benjamin insists on pushing my bicycle through the soft sand and back to the road, a final gesture of hospitality before I start out on the road west again. There is something about the generosity of this family that both humbles and warms me. This is the first of many such encounters on my 1500km journey through Angola and northern Namibia and it reminds me of the goodness of ordinary people. This is more poignant for me given the tragic war that tore this country apart for so many years.

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When I noticed the rear-wheel puncture I knew what was going to happen next. "Oh no, not here." I muttered to myself as I anticipated the curious gallery likely to gather to watch my repairs. I'd pulled off the tar to buy water at a collection of shack-shops. It was bustling with young men. This was in fact a one-stop shopping centre for motor supplies. Instead of water I found motor oil, brake pads and assorted other things useful to 2-stroke motorcycle owners, but not to a cyclist with dwindling water supplies.



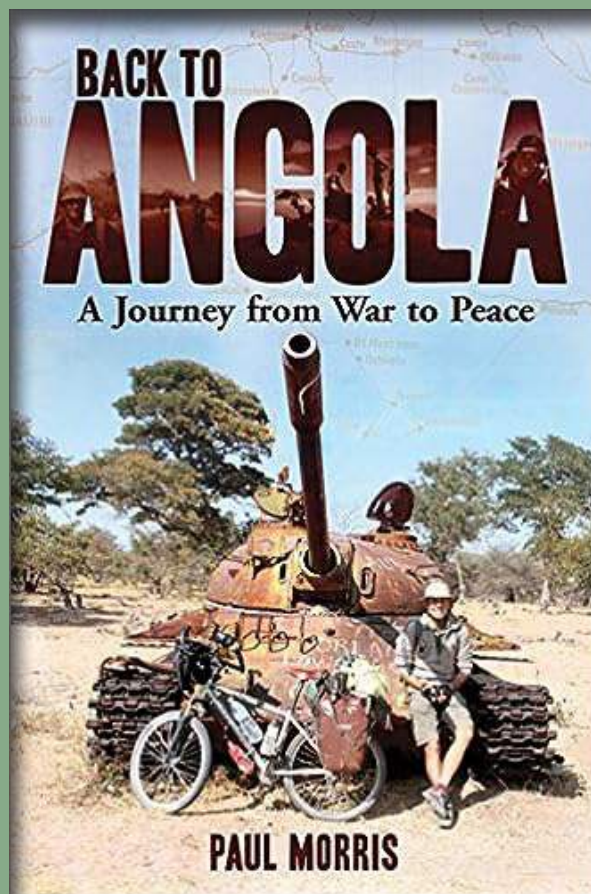
I noticed the puncture as I was wheeling my bike through the soft sand back to the tar. Already the shoppers had stopped to stare at the sight of me and my fully laden bike. I pushed the bike up to a ramshackle fence lay it down in the sand and unpacked it. Although mechanically inept I can handle a tube change, but the audience was growing and with it my performance anxiety.

My tyre-levers produced a disquieting murmur of disapproval. I glanced up furtively at the frowning experts of many thorny bike-problems. Once the tyre was loose enough from the rim I slid my fingers under the edge to loosen the rest. A murmur of approval rippled through what was now a crowd of at least sixty men. I found the offending thorn and pointed at it with an emphasised “aha!” Three of the spectators leaned in close and nodded grimly. Tube in place, I produced my pump from my water-pack with a theatrical “ta-da!”, now warming to my audience. But this was no laughing matter, their frowns frozen on their faces. Even the theatrical bows with which I ended the show elicited stony-faced silence.

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I was several days into a 1500 kilometre tour from Cuito Cuanavale in south-eastern Angola, to Tsumeb in Namibia. Last time I'd been in Angola was during the war in 1987 when as a 20 year-old conscript I spent three months in the often thick forests between Mavinga and Cuito Cuanavale.

During my trip I rode through the tall trees of the beautiful forest that covers much of the south-eastern corner of Angola. I also crossed many of the rivers that journey with impunity across national borders. Several hundred kilometres into Angola I crossed the wide Kuvango River which starts life in the highlands of Angola and ends in the vast swamps of the Okavango Delta. I crossed the Kunene at the vibrant, if a little scruffy city of Matala, and remembered that as a conscript, twenty-five years earlier, I had swum in the same river at the Hippo Pools near Ruacana Falls. These and other rivers provide vital water for people to drink, bathe and



wash clothes in. In many places on one side of a bridge I'd see women washing themselves and their children, with clothes and bed-linen draped over bushes. On the other side men would be washing themselves, their motorbikes and their cars. At the Cuito River I took my bike, white with dust, and gave it a full immersion baptism before washing myself in the clear, cold water.

I knew that I'd be camping wild on many nights so I carried a tent, sleeping bag, stove etc. I also carried about six days' worth of food and up to seven litres of water. In bigger towns I sought accommodation to wash my dirty clothes – I only took one change – and to clean my-





self. In hindsight I could have managed without the tent and made-do with a groundsheet.

I returned to see Angola in peacetime, to enjoy the beauty of the bush and meet the people who live the country that is in its tenth year of peace following thirty years of civil war. I thought about the ways I could travel and settled on cycling because I wanted to have the closest possible contact with the people and the landscape. It worked. I exchanged greetings with just about everyone along the road. Motorcycles would give me a friendly toot, people sitting outside the ubiquitous tavernas, would shout greetings or laugh in surprise. Often I would stop for a chat. I don't speak Portuguese so this usually took the form of me listing as many of the towns as I could remember between Cuito Cuanavale and wherever I found myself. The average response consisted of eyebrows shooting upwards at great speed followed by the Portuguese equivalent of "All the way from Cuito?" "Yes", "On a bicycle?" "Yes". Then there could be hoots of surprised laughter. I couldn't tell whether I was being judged to be strong and courageous, or insane. Probably the latter.

My longest day came after I decided to push all the way to Lubango in what turned out to be a 126km ride. I knew the regional capital of Huila Province was up against the mountain but I hadn't reckoned on the number of hills I'd have to climb at the end of a long day. Then, looking forward to a hot shower and a cold beer, I was told

that the place I'd chosen to stay was halfway up the mountain. It was like arriving in Cape Town after nine hours cycling to be told you needed to climb Kloof Street to get to your guesthouse.

The infrastructure, though improving rapidly, is still ravaged by the war. Guesthouses are not always to be found, and when they are, they're often full. In a R300 a night pensão my "shower" consisted of squatting over a bowl of cold water with only a candle for warmth and light.

The roads were surprisingly good. Road-builders are laying tar at an incredible rate. I enjoyed hundreds of kilometres of good tar, and a fair bit of old colonial tar, which was potholed, or shell-holed. Where in a car one would have to slow to a crawl to negotiate the damage, on my two narrow wheels I was usually able to find enough unbroken tar to cruise comfortably without breaking my rhythm.

Once or twice I found myself riding on a section of gravel that had been compacted in preparation for tarring. I ignored the no-entry sign and flew along the smooth surface while cars and trucks battled the loose gravel and sand on the parallel detour. Later in the ride I'd have no option but to ride a similarly poor section of sandy road and spend a good deal of time picking up myself and the bike after falling. Then the road-building ended and I was on an old rutted gravel road. The trees came to the road's edge creating a beautiful avenue which tunnelled off into the green-fringed distance. The ever-present mine-fields were closer so I perched on the road-edge when I took a snack-break.







When it got rough it was very rough. And as it got roughest, so my good fortune deserted me. On the worst piece of road, all loose gravel and sand, I started a bad bout of traveller's guts. I stopped regularly to rest. I had to cover over fifty kilometres. Nothing compared to the hundred kilometre daily average I was managing, but this was a difficult section, I was dehydrated and, at one point, heaved my much needed lunch into the sand. I was miserable, sick and felt very alone. I was in the middle of nowhere and needed to keep going.

I made it to Kuvango, on the river that eventually drains into the Okavango swamps, and holed up in a friendly but thread-bare pensao. No flushing loo and a limited supply of water which arrived in a bowl every morning only accentuated my discomfort. I spent three days recovering.

My bike, although a source of amusement amongst more image-conscious friends back home, was viewed as a piece of high-tech by many of the Angolans I met. Near Xangongo one very cool dude on a shiny Chinese two-stroke even offered to buy it. "Then how do I get home?" I asked with an exaggerated shrug. "No problem, no problem." He said, without explaining how the problem be solved.

My scraped old mountain-bike has lugs to attach a carrier and the v-brakes, even I can maintain. I imported the Brookes saddle and touring carrier for double the R1300 I paid for the bike.

For touring I figure that high-tech is a liability considering that the nearest bike shop capable of fixing, say, disc-brakes, was probably in Windhoek, about 2000kms from my starting point.

I crossed into Namibia at Oshikango, relieved that I could have long conversations in English and have long, hot showers. I felt satisfaction at having crossed a chunk of Angola on two wheels relying only on leg-power and having said hello to just about everyone along the road. I only had to cover the remaining three hundred kilometres to Tsumeb to complete what had been a rich and rewarding ride on my aging Silverback mountain-bike.

### *Experiences*

I travelled nearly 1500 kilometres on my bicycle and exchanged a greeting with nearly everyone walking next to that long road. Bon dia, boa tarde. They would smile or stare or laugh at the unusual sight of a man on a loaded bicycle, so many interactions and connections that would not have been possible had I roared through Angola and part of Namibia with the aid of a motor. My bicycle, a conversation piece.





# Diensplig VS Staande Mag

## Brig-Genl Tony Savides se Siening

### ‘n UITSIG VANUIT DIE OORKANT: DEEL 2/6

*Onthou asb dat alle menings, kommentaar ens, deur hierdie reeks myne is, en myne alleen. Verskonning word steeds aangebied vir die gebruik van kru taal (al is dit toepaslik!)*

#### *‘n Pleit om simpatie? Nog nooit!*

Dit wat in Deel een en hierna gebesig is, en word, is geensins ‘n poging om simpatie uit te lok vir die “arme SMag lede” wat met diensplig opgesaal is nie. Vergeet dit! Ons het geweet waarvoor ons onself inlaat en het dus dit ontvang wat ons verwag het, al was die water soms veel dieper as wat ons verwag het. Toe die nasionale dienspligstelsel in die laat 1970s begin blom het, het dit duidelik geword dat baie meer offisiere en instruksie benodig sou word, en is die NDP Juniorleier opleidingsstelsel van stapel gestuur.

#### *‘n Nuwe soort “professional”*



Ek wil uit die staanspoor verklaar dat ek van mening is dat die juniorleiers wat die SA Leër in die 1970s en 1980s opgelei het, die beste was te wêreld! Hierdie jong seuns, die meeste nog vars van die skoolbanke af, het in minder as 12 maande van skoolseun na leiers van formaat gevorder – van skoolseun tot bevel van ‘n peloton, troep, of seksie in die geveg en onder moeilike omstandighede. Daar moet ook in ag geneem word dat, soos met sport, die kwaliteit van leiding dikwels van die gehalte van die res van die span afhang; dus moet daar ook lof toegeswaai word aan die infanteriste, pantsermanne, gunners, sappeurs, seiners edm, wat deur hulle leiers in gedugte spanne ontwikkel is, en wie op hulle beurt hulle leiers in die proses ondersteun het.

Daarby moet daar ook (soms met teensin) erkenning aan die SMag komponent gegee word wat die DPs onder hulle bevel en toesig, gevorm, opgelei en selfs geboelie het om in professionele soldate, -leiers, en -spanne te ontwikkel. Die gevegsvaardighede is verder onder die sg SOPs by eenhede soos 61 Meg Bn Gp, 32 Bn, en vele ander, finaal geslyp, maar in die geveg waar dit werklik saak gemaak het, was dit dikwels die grondslag wat op De Brug, Lohatla, Potch, Infanterieskool en ander opleidingsterreine gevestig is, wat die deurslag gegee het.

Die hele reeks drils (of te wel die meeste daarvan) insluitend die rondfoks en opfoks, en selfs die dissipline van die paradegrond, het skielik sin gemaak – storingdril, seksiegevegsdrils, pantseraksie, moes instinktief uitgevoer word. Almal onthou “dash, down, crawl, observe,



sights, fire!” (hoewel die dril eintlik met “neem dekking!” moet begin, terwyl “rol” ook later na “down” ingevoeg is. Ek het my Vickerskursus circa 1965 meegemaak maar kan vandag nog die storingdril uitvoer: “raise, pull, tap. Fail, feel, feedback!” – selfs as ek slaap! Daar moet egter ook erken word dat waar drils ‘n handige manier van rondneuk was, hulle ook soms tot onnodige rondneuk gelei het om troepe bloot rond te neuk en te straf. Dit was wel soms ‘n goeie manier om span te bou en die manne te kry om saam te staan, maar die rasionale agter sommige (onwettige) optredes kan moeilik regverdig, of selfs verduidelik, word.

Die SAW het ongelukkig ook onder beide die SMag en die DP geledere, sadiste en boelies gehad wat hulle rang en posisie amper soos wapens gebruik het om hulle onderdane te martel en te straf. Dit was, en is nog onwettig en onverskoonbaar – punt! Dié was die onprofessionele soldate (voltyds en deeltjyds) wat die eer en die reputasie van soldaat-wees beswadder het. Hulle is hopelik almal uiteindelik uitgewerk of, nadat hulle tot ‘n nuwe besef gekom het (gewoonlik na dissiplinêre optrede), weer as ware professionele lede in ere herstel.

Tydens die 1960s, toe diensplig nog nuut was, en daar nog nie groot operasionele nood was nie, is sommige DPs werklik onredelik deur sommige Smag personeel hanteer wat tot ernstige probleme, en selfs ‘n paar noodlottige insidente, gelei het. Die enigste “positief” wat hieruit gevloei het is die besef dat daar ‘n geweldige onus op die SMag berus om, wat die hantering van DPs aanbetref, baie meer professioneel en verantwoordelik op te tree. Die doel was nie om DPs te straf oor hulle opgeroep is nie, maar eerder om hulle voor te berei vir welke take die SAW ook in die oog het.

Vanaf 1964 tot 1966 is ek by 5 SAI Bn gestasioneer waar, onder die leiding en voorbeeld van die legendariese Kmdt “Pik” Van Noorden, ons die DPs streng, dog regverdig hanteer het. Oom Pik het in WO2 in die Royal Marine Commandos gedien en was op alle vlakke ‘n navolgenswaardige voorbeeld; ek het deur-

gaans in my verdere handel en wandel met DPs sy voorbeeld probeer volg.

Dit mag in sommige gevalle moeilik wees om te glo, maar die meeste SMag lede was ook voorheen seuns en jong manne gewees, en het ons ook geweet hoe dit was om op ‘n baie jong ouderdom die uitdagings van soldaat-wees te konfronteer. Ons was meestal vrywillig, hoewel baie ook as DPs begin het en later by die Smag aangesluit het. Ons vaarwel toe ons die huis verlaat het om “army toe te gaan” was dalk minder traumaties en minder emosioneel as dié van die meeste DPs, maar ons het geweet hoe dit was!



### *Troepe treine*

Die troepe treine wat DPs na die opleidingsbasisse gebring het was dalk vir hulle ‘n nagmerrie, maar vir die arme SMag lede wat elke mengelmoes “Civvy-tot-soldaat” groep moes begelei was dit vir ons ook moeilike tye gewees. Ons het nooit geweet wat op ons wag nie – van die tranedal voor vertrek, deur die reis self, tot oorhandiging van die groep aan die betrokke eenheid op die eindpunt stasie. By een vertrek stasie (“no names, no pack drill”) het die plaaslike kommandement (spreekwoordelik) ‘n naamlys en die punt van ‘n ketting aan die begeleiers oorhandig waaraan ‘n mislike klomp dienspligtiges vasmag is! (Darrem nie so erg nie, maar hierdie betrokke streek en -stad was destyds berug as die “tuiste van ducktails en dagga-rokers”.) Ek het persoonlik deelgeneem aan sowat 12 sulke treine, sommige as trein-bevelvoerder, en elkeen was ‘n nuwe, unieke ondervinding. Die oorweldigende meerderheid DPs



het hulle goed gedra en was selfs nogal in ‘n goeie bui – wel, so goed soos onder die omstandighede verwag kon word!

Die eskortgroep het gewoonlik uit een of twee offisiere bestaan en ‘n aantal OOe, en ons is oor die algemeen met respek (vrees?) bejeën. Ek het min onaangename insidente ervaar en die paar wat wel gebeur het was gewoonlik as gevolg van die “sterkmaak-voggies” wat sommige gedink nodig was om hulle vir die reis en die toekoms voor te berei. Party was so erg dat hulle amper in vloeibare vorm op die trein geklim het! Soms het bravade gevolg maar hoe nader aan die eindbestemming en hoe erger die kopseer, hoe vinniger het die sterkman gees verdwyn.

Ek het ‘n punt daarvan gemaak om op die peron te wees as die manne opklim en om, saam met my span, gedurig deur die trein te stap om te verseker dat alles in orde was en gebly het. Wat vir my vreeslik interessant was, is dat baie van die manne die moeite gedoen het om vooraf bietjie navorsing gedoen en is ons met baie vrae gepeper, en self stories wat deur vorige innames aan hulle oorgedra is – seker maar om van die spoke te verwilder! In die meeste gevalle kon ons almal verseker dat Dante se Inferno” nie hulle eindbestemming was nie en gerusstel dat diensplig glad nie so sleg gaan wees nie. Van hulle het dit egter bloot as “Army PR” beskou en ons glad nie geglo nie, terwyl nóg ander dit maar met ‘n knippe sout aanvaar het.



Die paar keer wat ek wel ‘n lastige- of moeilike DP aangetref het, was daar gewoonlik ‘n sersant of korporaal met ‘n woeste uitdrukking en ‘n paar vreesaanjaende woorde byderhand wie die vreeslose leus (jakkalse?) baie vinnig tot mak lammetjies kon tem. Waar dit nie gewerk het nie, of so ‘n “duiwelse OO” nie byderhand was nie, het ‘n vinnige woordjie in die oor van ‘n AO of OO by die ontvangseenheid, gesorg dat die betrokke lid baie gou sy eerste les in “militêre etiket” (lees opfok) geleer het! In die meeste gevalle het dit skynbaar goed gewerk en was die informele terugvoer oor sulke karakters se vordering baie positief. Die groot les was dat die vloeibare sterkmaak-vloeistowwe in elk geval nooit nodig was nie!

### *Voorbereiding vir die “stryd”*

Terwyl Jannie en Johnny hulle vir diensplig voorberei het, het die ontvangseenhede ook vir die stryd wat voorlê voorberei. Nie deur nuwe straf- en ander onaangename truuks uit te dink om te beoefen nie. Inteendeel, ‘n groot fokus was juis op die regte hantering van die inname, veral om die nuwe DP leiergroep (JLs) daarop attent te maak dat die slegte goed wat hulle gebeur het, nie op die inkomende inname uitgehaal mag word nie. Die slegste wat hulle aan hulle onderdane mag doen moet omtrent gelyk wees met die beste wat hulle self ervaar het! Regtig?

Oor die algemeen het die voorbereiding vrugte afgewerp maar idiote was daar ook. Vir die Smag lede was die effens makliker om hulle die spreekwoordelike dood voor die oë te sweer, want enige onreëlmatigheid kon tot dissiplinêre optredes gelei het wat, op die ergste, die loopbaan van ‘n moontlike Rommel of Napoleon vinnig tot ‘n einde kon bring.

Toe ek in 1980/81 bevelvoerder was van 1 SAI Bn, het ons tot vier innames gelyk in die eenheid op sterkte gehad met meer as 3,000 DP’s – en dit in eenheidslyne wat slegs ‘n maksimum van 1,000 moes akkommodeer. Dank-sy die reuse pogings van beide SMag lede en



die DP leiergroep het alles goed verloop; terwyl die eenheid se Leërdamesvereniging, en ons gesinne ook hulle kant hard en duidelik gebring het! Hier moet ook 'n lansië vir die “admin en log” personeel van die eenheid gebreek word. Hoe die sjefs, die stoormanne, die tiffies, personeelklerke en ander onder sulke moeilike omstandighede en met minder geriewe en personeel as wat hulle moes hê.

### *Dames en gesinne?*

Weereens, ongelowiges (wie geglo het dat hulle hul duiwelhorings en-sterre onder hulle barette en uniforms weggesteek het) en ten spyte, het die meeste Smag lede wel vrouens en kinders gehad – en 'n gesinslewe daarby. Die knorrige ou bogger wat sonder om te huiwer 'n opfok met 'n Ratel wiel of -sleepstang op 'n onskuldige jong DP kon toedien, saans sy jong seuntjie met sy skoolwerk help het en ook hoe om sy ma se buie te omseil. Die hardegat bliksem van 'n korporaalsou oor die naweek by haar of sy ouers se huis vermaak in 'n stemtoon en met 'n sagte houding wat sy DP onderdane hom sonder aarseling na 'n sielkundige sou verwys: met die vraag “wat het jy met ons regte korporaals gemaak?”

Soos opleiding gevorder het, het die DPs al hoe meer bewus geraak van die eggenotes en die gesinne, en al hoe meer met hulle te doen gekry. Hulle sou mos nooit verwag dat die RSM pannekoek en roomys by die sportdae sou uitdeel nie – of hoe? Gelukkig het die dames van die eenheid se Leërdamesvereniging sulke dienste baie beter uitgevoer – en ook, saam met die eenheid se spysenier staf, tee en koekies vir die manne voorberei wat op pad was grens toe, en met hulle terugkeer. Die hardekwas houding van die Smag lede het by sulke geleenthede ook heelwat versag – maar slegs so lank as hierdie “skietstilstande” geduur het!

### *.. en “mood swings”!*

Wat ook al die regte Afrikaans is vir “mood swings” was dit vir die DPs moeilik om dit by hulle instrukteurs te ervaar en begryp. Vanaf knorrig en ongenaakbaar tydens opleiding, tot 'n paar uur later glimlaggend saam in 'n skrum op die rugbyveld sak met rang, status en ander verskille skynbaar van minder belang. Om dit later te probeer uitbuit sou egter 'n groot fout wees!, Soos opleiding gevorder het, het die DPs ook agterkom dat die “Ons teen hulle” (DPs vs SMag) geleidelik, en in albei rigtings, slegs “ons” geword het - nie slegs oor die SMag lede se houding wat versag het nie, maar ook omdat die DPs ook al hoe meer seksie-, peloton-, kompanie- en eenheidstrots ontwikkel het. Hulle was nou deel van 'n groter familie!

Gustav Venter (in sy skreeusnaakse-, dog baie geloofwaardige boek “Rowers”) het die verskynsel mooi opgesom: “In fact, the rowers were now experiencing their first uncomfortable inklings that they were living in two worlds, one where they had a long personal history and were being cherished and feted, and another where they were increasingly being imbedded into an entity much bigger than the sum of its parts. Their loyalty to their families would never waver, but their loyalty to their comrades would grow firmer and more fervent every day.”

Ongelukkig staan Gustav se verhaal nog op basiese opleiding die pas en markeer (Volume 1) met die res van die verhaal oor sy diensplig tydperk hopelik nog te volg. Wat hy hier beskryf is heeltemal waar – die ontwikkelende same-



horigheid wat, teen die tyd wat hulle gereed was vir operasionele ontplooiing, die DPs, saam met die Smag komponent, 'n digte gevegselement gevorm het. By die gevegseenhede sou daar verder aan die vaardighede geslyp word tot die betrokke element in alle opsigte gevegsgereed was en as volwaardige deel van die eenheid aanvaar is.

Op dié stadium sou die DPs ook tot die besef gekom het dat die vele opfoks en rondfoks eintlik nie doelloos was nie en dat hulle, hulself ten spyte, nou werklik operasioneel was. Die Smag en die DP JLs wie aanvanklik as die vyand beskou is, geleidelik van instrukteur, tot onderwysers, tot afrigters en uiteindelik aanvaarding as leiers en “deel van ons”.

Met operasionele diens, het die einste Smag

en die DP JLs wat saam op die Flossie gery het en saam met hulle op Omuthiya of by ander opleidings terreine hulle vaardighede verder geslyp het, ook saam met hulle in die geveg ontplooi het. Skielik was die monsters van die skietbaan en die vuurdoopbaan hulle kamerade wat saam met hulle die wel en weë van die gevegssoldaat gedeel het. Van die SMag lede was gegradeer, of het ander gesertifiseerde “civvy” kwalifikasies gehad, en sou op die oog af eerder by een of ander burgerlike loopbaan gepas het – sou hulle nie reeds uiters bekwame en professionele beroep-soldate geword het nie! Soos die DPs met groot afwagting na briewe, pakkes en nuus van die huis af uitgesien het, so ook het die Smag lede; en soos die geliefdes tuis vir die veiligheid van hulle seuns, eggenotes, broers, en kêrels gevrees het, so ook het die geliefdes van die SMag lede by hulle tuisbassise.





# Uncovering Angola's War Relics

The R5 from the Ratel on the Lomba, where Mac McCallum and Jose Alves died on 13 September 1987, finally got restored and cleared of rust, and could be viewed at the Villa Menongue museum. (2021)

**Stefan van Wyk**



*Chambinga Heights*  
*-15.18951*  
*19.30513*

Back to the battlefields of my youth  
Where I fought with valor and truth

Through the thick fog of war I saw  
The courage of others, brave and raw

My youth now long since gone,  
But I still remember the battles won.  
In my heart, I still can hear,  
The cries of laughter and of fear,

We fought, we laughed and we cried,  
The memories of battles still echo inside.  
When I close my eyes I can still see  
The battlefields of my youth lingers in me

The courage that guided us through the fight,  
The strength and spirit that pushed us on,  
The determination through the night,  
The bond of brotherhood could not be un-  
done.

The thrill of victory, the sorrow of defeat,  
The memories of battles; no one can repeat,  
The feeling of accomplishment and pride,  
The camaraderie never to be denied.

The sounds of battle have faded away,  
Yet, my memories are here to stay.





SADF nr 8 mine taken from Tumpo after being in the ground for 33 years. (2021)

*Stefan van Wyk*

Daar was verskeie Fapla mynvelde rondom Tumpu. SAW het toe 'n nuwe mynveld reg rondom dit gelê, van die Dala rivier af, reg oor die Anhara Lipanda, net wes van die ou 59ste Brigade stellings verby. Daar is SAW sowel as geligte Fapla myne gebruik in daardie mynveld.

Daar was minstens 3 eie magte ongevalle in daardie mynveld, 2 terwyl hy gelê is, een daarna. Een van die sappeurs het 'n AP detoneer met sy hand terwyl myne gelê is en hul bevelvoerder op die tyd, Kapt Piet Kok, as ek reg onthou, het op 'n AP getrap kort daarna. Beide was naby die Dala. Die derde geval was 'n sappeur wat in die mynveld in beweeg het met sy besem en ook 'n AP met sy tone gedetoneer het, dit was naby die ou 59ste stellings.

*Kruger Lötter*

*HALO Mine clearing : Tumpo 1.*

*Stefan van Wyk 2022*

'n Paar honderd meter wes van 59ste in die boslyn staan verskeie tenks wat op 14 Feb '88 uitgeskiet is, buiten die wat in die stellings uitgeskiet is. Langs een van daardie tenks het die half verbrande liggaam van 'n Kubaan met lang rooi hare gelê. Maande later was hy nog daar, die hare toe rondgewaai en versprei oor 'n area. Destyds het dit my nie gepla nie, maar baie jare later, toe ek self ook kinders het, het ek telke male aan hom gedink.

Hy was dalk teensinnig Angola toe gestuur, 'n oorlog halfpad om die wêreld wat hom glad nie raak in Kuba nie. Iewers in Kuba het hy ook geliefdes gehad, dalk 'n vrou, dalk kinders, dalk 'n meisie, waarskynlik ouers. Hulle het nooit 'n liggaam gekry om te begrawe nie, om berusting te vind nie, dalk net 'n tyding dat hy vermis is en hier lê sy oorskot en vergaan langs sy tenk, nie een van sy geliefdes weet waar dit is nie, hoe dit gebeur het nie, of hy nie dalk nog leef nie. Oorlog is wreed en al wen jy, verloor jy steeds, al besef jy dit eers jare later.

*Kruger Lötter*





The start of the 29km SADF minefield. It start north of Dala river with only AP's and in the area of the Dala's origin start the nr8's. Each Nr8 has got 3x AP sentries around it, and there is a Nr8 every 4meters. That's just one line. There are 4 lines, 50m apart from each other.



**Stefan van Wyk 2021**



Nr 8 minefield at the Lomba, on the old Portuguese road. Elephant bones are all that remain of these magnificent creatures that roamed the area in the past (2021)

**Stefan van Wyk**



Olifant Tenkwiele. 1.7km Suid oos van Tumpo rivier se oorsprong.

**Stefan van Wyk**





The crater was re-discovered 30 years later on 09 February 2018, in the late afternoon.

### Stefan van Wyk

On February 20, 1988, four Mirage fighter jets launched an attack on enemy positions. The leader of the formation was Major Norman Minne, accompanied by Frans Coetzee, Ed Every, and Trompie Nel.

They attacked the target from the same route and direction they had used several times earlier that day. After completing the attack, Every dived downwards to return home but called for a missile break. As Nel approached Every, a second missile struck Every's Mirage, causing it to crash and burst into flames.

Despite rescue efforts, Every's body could not be found, suggesting he was unable to activate his ejection seat. The incident deeply saddened the squadron leader and the community at their home base, as 1 Squadron had been away from home for over five months.



*An APFSDS rod, that came from a T55/54 in Angola.*



# Back to the Cuban Training Fields - 1994

Dawid Lotter

*I participated in Ops Modular and served with 60 Brigade in 1989. After the Bushwar I pursued a second career in civilian life. But I adapted poorly, so when I was approached by Executive Outcomes to join them as the Mechanised consultant for FAA (Forças Armadas Angolanas), I joined. The mechanised BMPII training wing was at Funda about 45 km east of Luanda. This was the former base of the Cuban 50th Brigade.*

I spent quite some time at Funda while training the BMPII battalion. It enabled me to understand the Cuban training system, area and facilities during the Bushwar and how large it actually was. In 1994, it was still the BMPII and tank battalion's bases. I spent 3 months at Funda.

It was four, maybe five years after the last Cubans occupied the base. The infrastructures were still intact, it covered a huge area with a lot of underground submerged buildings. The average size of these was very much those of a SADF bungalow in Bloemfontein. If you stand inside on the floor, your head will be about on level with the surface of the ground outside. The roof were sturdy corrugated roof structures. I could not determine whether that was bunkers for logistics or if it was actually sleeping quarters. What gave me the idea that it was sleeping quarters is the graffiti on the inside walls; letters to loved ones, sketches of loved ones and in the normal political graffiti. What I couldn't understand is how they keep the bunkers dry in a heavy rainstorm because the water will stream in and flood the inside, but it seemed it wasn't a problem to them. Maybe there was a structure at the entrance that prevented that. I received 15 BMPII's, all brand new from the production line. The crews to be trained was about 200 strong.

They completed their basic training at the training base at the Longa base (not to be confused with the town Longa in central Angola – this base was on the coast

where the Longa River exit into the ocean).

I had to teach myself on the technical and tactical nuts and bolts of the system since I was not allowed to make contact with the Russian advisors. The BMPII is quite an impressive tracked vehicle with very advanced technology. Given the educational level of the trainees and the limited time to train them proved to be a challenge. The automatic loading of the gun and the radio systems was not easy to teach to a soldier who has been in the army for maybe two or three months and now you must train him on sophisticated equipment.

My team did what we could with the limitations. Everything went relatively well until one Friday at the end of the training session of about three weeks. The battalion was ordered to do thorough maintenance on the vehicles with an inspection on the Saturday morning.

With great enthusiasm, they started cleaning the vehicles, but on the Saturday morning during the inspection it was a catastrophe. They washed the vehicles with hose pipes on the outside, not a problem. But on the inside everything was washed with hose pipes and water as well. The electronics on the communication and weapon system inside was ruined. The battalion commander Mundu Real, had a lot of explaining to do. For the following week, my training team stayed in our quarters not doing training because Russian technicians had to come in to solve the problems and we were not al-

Me being accustomed to the Ratel found the noise factor for the crew at the back of the BMPII overwhelming. The tank track sprockets made a lot of noise and the crew compartment or the troop compartment at the back acted as a sound box for all those noises.

What struck me in working in the huge trai-

After graduation the BMPII battalion was transferred to Cabo Ledo, about 100 kilometres south of Luanda. From there large Russian Antonov cargo planes lifted them to Sao Remo in the far east of Angola

Being in Funda after the Bush War to me was an eye opener about the other side.

## *Lekker Spring Cleaning vir September*



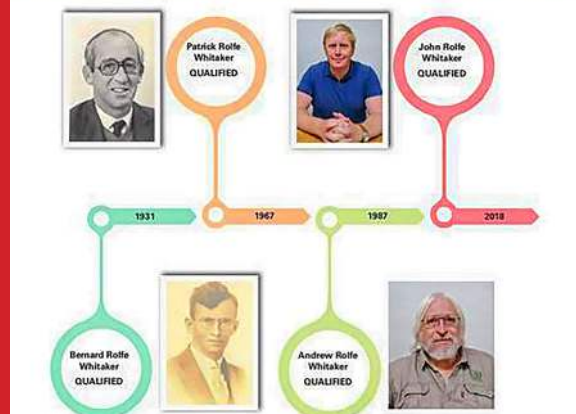


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